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This paper reports two substudies of racial differences on measures of self esteem, social interest or dependency, and identification with particular others. In one study 72 Negro youngsters in a Headstart program were compared with 72 white children, and in another study a biracial sample of 96 children entering first grade was compared. The variable of social class was included in the second study. The measures used were derived from the self-social symbols method in which subjects either draw or paste on a sheet of paper a symbol to represent the self. Negro children were found to have lower self esteem in both samples. On the measure of social interest, the Headstart Negro youngsters more often placed themselves outside the group, while in the first grade group a race by class interaction was found. The Headstart Negro group identified more with mother and teacher, while in the first grade group, the differences were related to class, not race. Social class seems to be salient as a determinant of self esteem, social interest, and patterns of identification in young children of both races. (NH)

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# THE SELF-CONCEPT OF NEGRO AND WHITE SCHOOL BEGINNERS

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# The Self-Concept of Negro and White School Beginners

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This paper presents findings from studies carried out by Edmund Henderson and myself in relation to the self-concept of children just entering school in a rural area of the South. Since many of the subjects are Negroes, the Negro and white responses may be readily contrasted. The ultimate aim of these studies is to relate these personality characteristics to later progress in school; thus a longitudinal design is employed and the studies are still in progress.

Before describing this empirical work, I should like to posit briefly why we should expect racial differences in self-concept at school entrance. Argyle (1967) suggested that the self-concept derives from three sources, all of them social. One is direct communication about the self from others; the second is self-comparisons with others in the immediate environment; and the third is derived from the role assigned to the person by the cmmmunity.

When one considers small children in the rural South, it may be readily seen that the inferior social status accorded the Negro, with its accompanying conditions of occupational, educational and social discrimination, results in a situation for the Negro child which is objectively inferior. For example, incomes, occupational levels, educational levels, family stability, housing and health

are all at lower levels for the Negroes. In addition, derogatory attitudes toward the Negro prevail in a proportion of the white population. From all three of Argyle's sources, then, the Negro child is more likely than the white to receive information that suggests both inferiority and rejection. The extent to which such negative information is assimilated into the self-concept, and the resulting race-related differences in the self-concept are of both theoretical and practical concern.

In these studies, as with all the papers in this symposium, the measures employed are derived from the self-social symbols method. This approach was originated by Robert Ziller using felt cutouts to study the self-perceptions of mental patients and has developed into a number of paper and pencil tests.

In these tests, the subject is presented with a series of symbollic arrays in which circles or other figures represent the self and other persons. The subject responds to each task by drawing or selecting a symbol to represent the self or by pasting a gummed circle representing the self onto the page with the other symbols. It is assumed that the relationships seen in the symbollic arrangements represent relationships within the person's life space, and that these patterns are readily interpretable, containing easily translatable common meanings. It is also assumed that the non-verbal mode is advantageous,

and that a collection of specific measures reflecting a variety of dimensions adds precision and depth. Finally, all scoring is objective, premitting the use of standard statistical techniques.

In the present studies, a pre-school form of the tests was used. Subjects were tested individually within two weeks before or after school entrance. One study included as subjects 72 Negro children in a Head Start program contrasted with 72 white children of the same age and community (see Long & Henderson, in press). In the second study, 96 Negroes entering first grade were compared with 96 whites (Long & Henderson, 1967). Each sample contained equal numbers of boys and girls. In the second study an attempt was made to control for socioeconomic class by using the occupation of the chief earner of the family; half of each group were in classes 6 and 7 on Hollingshead's Occupational Scale, half in classes 1 through 5. In both samples the Negro subjects had less preschool education, lower IQ's, and greater separation from father.

In this paper, I shall report differences found between Negro and white subjects for only the three measures which seem of greatest psychological significance; namely, self-esteem, social interest or dependency, and identification with particular others. All differences reported are statistically significant at the .05 level or better with a two-tailed test, and the three measures are not

significantly related to each other. In each case I shall try to integrate these findings with those from other studies involving children of various ages which appear to render the present findings more meaningful.

Esteem is considered to be the child's estimation of his worth in comparison with others and torefelct the ubiquitous evaluative dimension which appears to affect the connotative meaning of most concepts. The task measuring esteem in the pre-school tests consists of five circles arranged in a column. "The child is told that these circles stand for children and that he is to choose one circle to stand for himself. It is assumed that the choice of a higher circle refelcts a higher evaluation for the self. A split-half reliability coefficient of .77 has been found among 96 first graders for this measure. Scores for esteem have been found to be related to teachers' ratings of classroom behaviors, with higher scores associated with more mature behavior. They have also been found to differentiate kindergarten children classified as more or less mature on the Ilg-Ames tests for school readiness. In addition, in a longitudinal study they have been found to increase from the beginning of kindergarten to the end of first grade. A further correlate has been birth arder with higher scores found in two samples of first graders for the lower orders, who at this age would of course be larger, stronger and of

higher mental age than their younger siblings.

One would predict that Negro children would have a lower self-esteem than whites and this was found to a significant degree in both of the present samples. While there was a large overlap in the Negro and white distributions, more Negro children chose the very lowest position.

These results are as predicted and consistent, but one should not overgeneralize them to Negroes in other situations. Scheiner (1967), for example, using a horizontal measure of esteem which is positively correlated with the vertical, did not find overall differences in esteem between Negroes and whites among a sample of urban fifth graders where Negroes are a majority in the community, but did find a race by sex interaction. Negro females and white males were found to have higher esteem than Negro males and white females. These results seem to reflect the higher status of the Negro female than the male as well as the more common occurance of the matriarchal family among Negroes. The findings also suggest that in urban settings where possibly more egalitarian conditions plus a majority status for Negroes are found feelings of inferiority may not be as great. The effects of the continuing steady migration of the Negro from the rural South to urban settings may thus be of psychological benefit.

Findings from other studies which seem to add meaningfulness to the Negro-white differences in esteem is that among a sample of white high school students in the rural South (Long, Ziller, & Henderson, in press), a significant positive relationship was found between socioeconomic class as measured by father's occupation and esteem. Adolescents in an institution because of behavior problems also showed lower esteem than normal controls (Ziller, Long, & Bankes, 1968). Lower social status thus seems to be the critical variable and the present results suggest that it has been perceived and assimilated by the age of six.

A second task which differentiates the Negro and white school beginners is that of social interest or dependency. This construct is defined as the degree to which the person perceives himself as a part of a group of others as opposed to the perception of self as an individual. Social interest is measured in the pre-school test by presenting the child with a page on which three circles arranged at the apexes of a triangle appear to one side. The child is told these circles stand for other people. He is given a gummed circle to stand for himself and told to paste it down anywhere on the page. Placement within the group of others is scored as social interest or dependency. The split-half reliability coefficient among first graders for this task was .75.

Scores for social interest have been found to increase with grade in school during the elementary years after an initial decrease from the first to the second grade (Long, Henderson, & Ziller, 1967). Elementary pupils who placed the self within the group expressed a significantly greater preference for group activities than did those placing the self outside the group. Among two first grade samples, scores were positively related to age, and among a high-achieving group of fifth graders to reading achievement scores (Henderson & Long, 1967).

For Negro-white comparisons among first graders, results differed somewhat for the two samples. For the Head Start study, Negroes placed themselves more often outside the group, while for the second study a race by class interaction was found, with white middle-class children and Negro lower-class children showing higher scores.

Other studies which support these findings include that of Taylor (1967), who found significantly lower scores for sixth grade Negroes compared to whites in a sample which included both urban and rural subjects. In another study, a positive relationship was found between social interest and socioeconomic class among white adolescent subjects (Long, Ziller, & Henderson, in press).

Similarly, in some unpublished work with Kramer, a sample ofurban females, aged 17 to 22, and mostly Negro, who were students in an Office of Economic Opportunity training program, showed significantly lower scores on this measure than did college girls of the same age and community. In addition, the institutionalized adolescents compared with normal controls showed significantly lower scores (Ziller, Long, & Bankes, 1968). Thus, in five of these six studies lower social status is associated with lower scores for social interest, suggesting an isolated, perhaps ostracized, position for the person with a less desirable position.

The exception is the race by class interaction among the first graders where this relation holds for the whites but not the Negroes. A number of explanations are tenable for these conflicting results: categorization by class for the Negro subjects may have been somewhat inaccurate; developmental trends may have confounded the relationship; or, more positively, the middle class Negro, since he is a minority in the community, may occupy a particularly isolated position, which is reflected in the lower scores for social interest.

The evidence presented thus far by and large finds two of the three hypothesized traits of Ziller's (1968) alienation syndrome in the lower status subject and indeed suggests (with some reservations for inconsistencies)

that these qualities are present in the Negro child at school entrance. Unfortunately, measures of self-centrality are not included in the pre-school test. Taylor (1967), however, found sixth grade Negroes significantly higher than whites on this measure.

One additional set of differences among the first graders seems of particular interest--those related to patterns of identification. In these tasks, the subject is presented with a row of circles with a sketch of another person (mother,father, teacher, friend) in the extreme left circle. The subject is asked to select a circle for the self, with a circle closer to the other given a higher score for identification. Reliability coefficients among first graders for these measures ranged from .64 to .86, and the four scores were found to be positively related to each other, suggesting a general trait of "closeness to others".

Evidence as to empirical meaning comes from various studies. In three samples, including one from South India, children separated from thier natural fathers had significantly lower scores for identification with father than did those living with father. Head Start children rated "shy with teacher" placed the self significantly further from teacher than did those rated "friendly with teacher"" (Long & Henderson, in press). In two samples

girls placed self closer to mother than boys, while in two other samples boys placed the self closer to father than girls. Identification with teacher declined over the grades for elementary children, especially for the boys (Long, Henderson, & Ziller, 1967) and a significant movement away from teacher was found in a longitudinal study between kindergarten entrance and the end of first grade for the boys in the sample.

For the Negro-white comparisons in the Head Start study the Negroes were found to identify significantly more with mother and teacher ( the majority of the teachers were Negro) and less with father than the whites. In the second study, Negroes showed less preference for father (in forced choice items) but for the identification tasks for mother and teacher, differences were related to class not race. Lower class children in both races placed the self closer to the other.

Similar findings in which the lower class group placed the self closer to mother were found for the training program girls in comparison with the college girls, and for the lower caste subjects compared with the higher caste subjects in India (Ziller, Long, Ramana, & Reddy, in press). In a sample of white high school subjects, lower class subjects placed the self closer to teacher and further from father than did middle class subjects (Long, Ziller, & Henderson, in press).

Thus, the Negro-white differences found in the Head Start study would seem attributible to the lower class status of the Negroes. Less identification with father for lower class subjects would seem to stem from greater father absence. Greater identification with mother may also be related to more frequent one-parent families, where a matriarchal pattern prevails, or may stem from the greater insecurity of the lower class child. Another possible explanation is the closer spacial arrangements in the home, where smaller quarters would seem to lead inevidably to closer personal relations. It is possible that the lower class child's closer identification with his mother generalizes to his teacher when the child enters school. Whether such close attachment to teacher tends to facilitate or impede learning remains to be seen.

A summary of the findings for self-esteem, social interest and patterns of identification thus indicates the salience of socioeconomic class. In spite of certain inconsistencies, one may tentatively comclude that lower esteem, less social interest, less identification with father and greater identification with mother and teacher characterize the lower class child, both Negro and white. Moreover, these characteristics appear to be present at the time these children enter school.

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